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TIMELY FARM TOPICS - 32 a 1

(Farm Science Serves the Nation No. 15)

A PROTECTING PIGS FROM HOG CHOLERA

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Recorded by Ernest Moore and M. L. DuMars, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Tuesday, May 8, 1945. Time, without announcer's parts, four minutes and 25 seconds.

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) And now a transcribed report, from the United States Department of Agriculture, of interest to everyone who likes pork chops and bacon -- broiled ham and sausage.

The Nation's goal for the fall pig crop is 37 million head this year -- 18 percent more than the number raised last fall. Reason for this increase is the heavy demand for pork.

But there's one thing that's no respecter of goals, and that's hog cholera. How to prevent this dread disease -- and keep it under control, will be told by Ernie Moore and Duke DuMars, of the Department of Agriculture.

TRANSCRIPTION

DUMEARS: Ernie, have you ever helped to vaccinate a lively young pig?

ERNIE MOORE: Many's the time, Duke! Back home on the farm, it used to be quite a big event when my Dad called in the veterinarian to do that job. There was always a certain amount of excitement for my brother and me -- because we always helped.

DUMARS: Made you feel important.

MOORE: Maybe that was it. Anyway -- we'd catch the pig, and get him stretched out on a slanting trough -- and then one of us would take hold of his hind legs, and the other the front ones, and we'd try to hold him still while he got his "shots."

DUMARS: And wouldn't he make an awful fuss!

MOORE: He'd squeal to high heaven! But I guess we were lucky at that. I was talking with an old-timer from Indiana the other day. He said when he was a boy, they couldn't prevent hog cholera. When the pigs started dying -- you just had to watch 'em die.

DUMARS: And then the bonfires started?

MOORE: Yes -- or they buried 'em. Secretary Wickard says he spent practically all of one summer digging holes to bury the pigs that died of cholera. You know when hog cholera got started in this country.

DUMARS: Just looked it up. 1833, in Ohio.

MOORE: And pretty soon it spread to every State in the Union.

DUMARS: In the Middle West -- it's always been worst in late summer and fall.

MOORE: Yes, but it can strike any place, any time. It seems to go in waves, like the flu. It'll miss a few years, and then all of a sudden you have a terrific outbreak. One of the worst was in 1887. Then it struck hard again in 1897, and 1913, and 1926. For a while there -- back in 1926 -- they couldn't make the serum fast enough to meet the demand.

DUMARS: Hope they've got plenty on hand now!

MOORE: You don't need to worry. Under the Serum Agreement, between the Department of Agriculture and the firms that make the serum, there's always a reserve supply -- just in case the disease might cut loose. You know the cause of hog cholera.

DUMARS: It's a virus. (I looked that up too.)

MOORE: Did you learn who was responsible for developing the serum?

DUMARS: Dr. Marion Dorset, for one.

MOORE: Three men -- Dorset, McBryde, and Niles -- get the credit for that first protective serum. They tried it out on farms around Ames, Iowa, and it was a wonderful success. Doctor Dorset patented the method -- and dedicated it to the public.

DUMARS: He was a public-spirited citizen all right.

MOORE: He certainly was. Do you think we ought to tell how this serum is made?

DUMARS: You mean -- me?

MOORE: Sure. Go ahead.

DUMARS: Well, the idea is -- they use a pig that's immune to cholera -- inject it with blood from a pig that's had the disease -- and the immune pig develops something in its blood, called antibodies, that kill off the poison virus.

MOORE: And the serum is made from the blood of the pig that is highly immune.

DUMARS: Don't they give a dose of the virus -- at the same time they give the serum?

MOORE: Yes, the serum alone makes the pigs immune to cholera for a month or two, but if you give 'em the proper dose of virus at the same time -- they're generally immune for life.

DUMARS: The serum and the virus -- sort of fight it out -- and the serum wins.

MOORE: Well, maybe that's not exactly the way a scientist would explain it -- but that's substantially correct. Sometimes -- while this fight is going on between the virus and the serum -- the pigs go off their feed for a little while. But they won't get much of a set-back if they're immunized while they're young. I was talking with Dr. MacKellar about this just the other day.

DUMARS: He's in charge of the hog-cholera control work -- conducted by the Bureau of Animal Industry.

MOORE: In cooperation with the States and the farmers.

DUMARS: Right. What did Dr. MacKellar say?

MOORE: He asked me to emphasize the fact that even though hog cholera is at a low ebb right now, don't be fooled. It's a bad actor. Liable to break out any time. The way to keep it out of your herd is to have your pigs immunized while they're young. If you get the job done early, the pigs are easier to handle -- and it takes less labor, and less serum and virus.

DUMARS: So you get the best protection, for the least amount of money.

MOORE: Exactly. Now here are a few other points: If you bring new stock on to the farm, keep 'em away from the rest of the herd for at least three weeks. See that pigs are farrowed and raised in clean surroundings -- and keep 'em away from public highways, running streams, and drainage from other premises. Remember that hog cholera is mighty contagious.

DUMARS: I have a question, Ernie. Can anybody besides a veterinarian do the immunizing?

MOORE: It's better to have a veterinarian do it when you can. It needs somebody who knows how to use the serum and virus in proper doses.

DUMARS: Say, what about this new "crystal-violet" vaccine -- developed by the Bureau of Animal Industry?

MOORE: So far, it's so new, it isn't being used very extensively -- but it does seem to have certain advantages. But whether you use the serum-virus method, or the newer vaccine -- the main thing is to get the job done early, while the pigs are young. In these days -- with the meat situation so critical -- farmers just can't afford to take chances with hog cholera.

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE) You've heard Ernie Moore and Duke DuMars, of the United States Department of Agriculture, in Number 15 of a series on "Farm Science Serves the Nation."

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